Biographic memorial of Dr. Charles N. Hewitt /

Charles N Hewite

BIOGRAPHIC MEMORIAL OF DR. CHARLES N. HEWITT.*

* Read at the monthly meeting of the Executive Council, November 9, 1914.

BY WILLIAM WATTS FOLWELL.

On the seventh day of July, 1910, it pleased the Lord of Life and Death to call from this world the soul of Dr. Charles Nathanael Hewitt.

The assertion is ventured that no one citizen of Minnesota has devoted himself more zealously to her welfare or conferred greater benefits on her people than he. If Minnesota shall propose to perpetuate the memory of men who have rendered great public service and furnished models on which her young men may pattern their lives, let her place among the statues she rears in the Capitol that of this citizen.

Such distinction may rightly be claimed for the man who organized the Public Health Service of Minnesota, and in the course of a quarter century's administration of that service brought it to a high state of efficiency, saved thousands of lives, and prevented an amount of sickness and suffering beyond estimation.

To record the services of such citizens and preserve the memory of them for a posterity which may be more appreciative of their value than the passing generation, is a worthy and proper function of this Society. The following contribution is accordingly submitted.

Charles Nathanael Hewitt was born in Vergennes, Vermont, June 3, 1836. Among his ancestors are many notable names. His parents moved to Potsdam, St. Lawrence county, New York, in his early childhood. For his college preparation he was sent to the old and

still famous Academy of Cheshire, Connecticut. From there he passed to Hobart College, Geneva, New York, by which he was graduated Bachelor of Arts at the 670 age of twenty. Because his heart was in the subject of medicine he did not aspire to academic honors, preferring to hold the position of demonstrator of anatomy in the Medical Department of the College. He was accorded the same position in the Medical College at Albany, New York, from which he received his degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1857. His father was a physician, and the devotion of the son to that profession was evident from boyhood.

Engaging in practice with his preceptor in Geneva, New York, he had barely become established before a call came to a new and unexpected sphere of medical practice. After the pitiful disaster of Bull Run in 1861 came President Lincoln's call for a great volunteer army to be enlisted for a term of three years.

General Charles B. Stuart, a distinguished civil engineer, and then Chief Engineer of the United States Navy, conceived the idea of raising a regiment of engineer troops, foreseeing the need there would be for such a corps in case of a great and protracted war. The War Department readily issued the necessary orders. In the course of a single month the companies were filled from central and western New York and northern Pennsylvania. The commissioned and non-commissioned officers were largely civil engineers, some of them of long experience and wide reputation. The rendezvous was at Elmira, New York, in August, 1861.

Dr. Hewitt's preceptor, a physician of more than local eminence, was appointed surgeon of the new regiment; but advanced age and developing infirmity soon disqualified him for active service, and he was obliged to resign before his first campaign was well begun. From the beginning the administrative duties had fallen on the assistant surgeon, Dr. Hewitt, who at once succeeded him as regimental surgeon.

It is necessary here to make some account of the peculiar organization of this regiment. When the time came for the muster-in of the engineer volunteers, it was discovered

that there was no provision of law for the enlistment of such troops. In expectation that Congress would as soon as possible ratify the action of the War Department in prematurely authorizing 671 such enlistment, the whole body, officers and men, cheerfully acquiesced in being mustered in as infantry. The regiment accordingly took the number 50 of New York infantry volunteers. It was not till after the close of the Peninsular Campaign that the expected Act of Congress was passed. As enacted it provided for the organization of volunteer engineer troops in regiments of twelve companies, each composed of 150 officers and enlisted men, having the pay and standing in all respects of engineers of the regular army.

Like the artillery regiments as then organized, this regiment was chiefly an administrative unit. Each company, like each battery of artillery, was equipped for independent movement and service. Soon after the passage of the Act referred to, the regiment was recruited to its full strength of 1,800 officers and men. The habitual distribution of the command was as follows: regimental headquarters and one company at Washington, D. C., in charge of the engineer depot and construction shops; two companies at the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac; and battalions of two or three companies at the headquarters of different army corps.

The division and scattering of the command imposed on the medical staff duties far greater than those falling on those of infantry regiments. It outnumbered those brigades which had seen two or more campaigns. Major Hewitt proved himself equal to every duty and emergency. Riding from camp to camp, he saw that his assistant surgeons and stewards were provided with needed appliances and supplies, and that they were attending to their duties. Dr. Letterman, Hooker's medical director, paid him the high compliment of saying, “He is the best regimental surgeon in the Army of the Potomac.” In the last years of the war he was chief surgeon of the Engineer Brigade of the Army of the Potomac, consisting of the 50th and 15th New York engineer regiments and the Regular Engineer Battalion. This position made a large addition to administrative duties. Details of

his activities in the successive campaigns must be left to a biographer, but some leading characteristics may properly be noted.

672

Major Hewitt had the qualifications essential to an expert surgeon, profound knowledge of anatomy, keen perception of the immediate problem, and extraordinary deftness of hand. But he was as conservative as he was expert, saving to the patient every member and organ which could be of use. He employed every means of antisepsis known at the time. He used to say that he would rather keep patients who had undergone severe operations under a tree in the field than expose them to the gangrene of the best general hospital in Washington or any other city. For his sick he trusted more to rest, fresh air, and good food, than to his medicine chests. The only complaint his men made was that he would not “doctor” enough. Many a man who came to sick call in fear of a “spell” of sickness went back to his company a new man after a couple of days of rest and good feeding. Intoxicants he prescribed very rarely, finding other stimulants effective enough and more benign. It ought to be added that the irrepressible joviality of the Chief Surgeon was perhaps the best of his remedies. Yet nobody could, when necessary, trim down a shirk or malingerer more effectually than this genial doctor.

Sanitation was his enthusiasm. To prevent disease among his men was ever more in his mind than the cure of the sick. His eye was ever on the general location and police of the camps, but particularly on the commissary departments and the company cooks.

The writer well remembers a certain occasion when his efficiency in sanitation was displayed in a notable way. A detachment of the regiment under command of the lieutenant colonel was in camp in the late summer of 1864 near the middle of the long line fronting Petersburg. Typhoid suddenly broke out and was decimating the companies. The commanding officer sent for Major Hewitt, who next day rode into camp. After a half hour's inspection he made his report and recommendation. In another half hour that camp ground was cleared of everything moveable upon it. The ground was thoroughly swept or

scraped, the drainage was made perfect, new sinks were dug, and new sources of water were opened. The cooks and commissary men got their orders toward more cleanly 673 handling and preparation of food. Then the camp was reestablished. Typhoid disappeared as suddenly as it had come. Major Hewitt deserved the commission of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel which came to him near the time of his muster-out with his regiment early in July, 1865.

His old clients at Geneva, N. Y., welcomed Dr. Hewitt on his return, and a promising career re-opened there; but correspondence with a college friend and brother physician roused an interest in Minnesota, and the opportunity to succeed to an established practice brought him to Red Wing soon after the close of the war.

A few years now passed devoted to extending his medical practice and the establishment of a home, modest, but so charming that no calls to larger spheres for the employment of his professional gifts ever tempted him to exchange it. It is safe to assert that had he moved to either of the “Twin Cities,” he would have won great distinction in surgery and enjoyed an ample income. He married in 1869 Miss Helen Hawley, a wife who more than fulfilled all the dreams of a young man's fancy.

Dr. Hewitt was not the man to be content with the career of a village doctor, however worthy that might be. As already suggested, he was inspired with the noble aspirations of preventive medicine. A diligent reader of the current literature of medicine, he had observed the operation of a law of Massachusetts passed in 1869 to establish a State Board of Health, and the similar action of California two years later. A bill drafted by him on the model of the Massachusetts Act, passed by the legislature on March 4, 1872, put Minnesota third on a distinguished roll.

This was not the first legislation in the State related to public health, but it was the first effective action. The “Code of 1857” had provided for municipal boards of health consisting of justices of the peace “in every precinct,” trustees of villages, and aldermen of cities.

Such boards were authorized to appoint health officers, to abate nuisances, and to quarantine smallpox.

In the general statutes of 1866 we find substantially the same provisions, with the exception that town supervisors are boards of health. 43

674

It was natural that these isolated boards of laymen should act, if at all, in a purely perfunctory manner. There could be little voluntary co-operation, and there was no central authority which could require united action.

The Act of 1872 provided for a central State Board of seven physicians, with the following duties:

1. To put themselves in communication with the local boards of health and with public institutions.

2. To take cognizance of the interests of health and life among the citizens generally.

3. To make sanitary investigations, especially of epidemics.

4. To study the sources of disease and the effects of localities, employments and circumstances on public health.

5. To devise a scheme for vital statistics.

6. To act as an advisory board to the State in all hygienic and medical matters.

7. To have charge of quarantine.

8. To enact and enforce measures necessary to the public health.

The Act further provided for a Secretary to perform and superintend the work prescribed, and to discharge such other duties as the Board might require; and it fixed his salary at $250 a year, payable quarterly.

The able and highly reputable physicians appointed to the board elected Dr. Hewitt their secretary. It was understood of course that he would give only spare time from his professional work.

It is obviously impossible within the limits of the present article even to catalogue the numerous activities of so enthusiastic and versatile an official. Certain groups of them may be noted and remarked upon.

The attention of the Board was naturally at once directed to putting itself into communication with local boards of health as required by the law. This was not difficult in cities and villages, but from rural towns there was almost no response. Upon representations to the legislature of 1873, that body enacted a law requiring town boards to elect annually a town board of health, one member to be a physician and town health 675 officer. These elected boards of health may have been an improvement, but there were no penalties to oblige them to conform to regulations of the State Board. It was not till 1881 that a heavy fine was laid on any local board or member there-of for refusing to obey the reasonable directions of the State Board of Health.

These efforts toward providing a machinery for promoting public health culminated in an act of the legislature of 1883, entitled “Health Code.” It enlarged the powers of local boards and gave the State Board still larger powers of regulation. Heavy penalties were attached to neglect of duty by local boards or members. This act was so drastic that some of its provisions were, in a later year, mitigated. It was found impracticable to compel local health officers to make thorough sanitary inspections of their towns, villages, or cities, as the case might be, and to report in writing both to the local and state boards. Prompt

repeated and effectual vaccination of all children had to be given up, in the face of a violent if absurd opposition.

The Act of 1885 receded from the plan of having town boards elect the town board of health, and revived the old plan of making the town board itself the board of health. It was not required that there should be a physician on the board, but that the board should employ a physician when they should deem it necessary, or when required to do so by the state board of health.

Otherwise the act of 1883 has not been materially changed, unless in the provision that there must be at least one physician on the board of health. If no town supervisor is a physician, the board of health must elect one.

The local boards of health, thus co-ordinated with and regulated by the state board, furnished a state-wide agency for checking the spread of epidemics, for preventing the pollution of waters, for the collection of vital statistics, and diffusing among the people information relating to health.

Without waiting for the perfection or indeed any considerable improvement in the mechanism for preserving public health, the state board, led by the executive secretary, began a 676 warfare against epidemic and infectious diseases. Before its creation the law for quarantine of smallpox had but occasionally been put into effect. Measures were at once taken for more effective isolation of outbreaks. Scarlatina was soon added to the list of infectious diseases to be isolated; then typhoid fever, and later diphtheria. The last named furnished a most striking illustration of the effect of isolation accompanied with improved medication and nursing. The number of reported deaths from diphtheria in 1882 was 1,607; in 1887, 788, a reduction of nearly one-half; and in 1895 the figure was 466, a little more than one-fourth the deaths thirteen years before. In those years the population of Minnesota had doubled. It took Dr. Hewitt some years to convince his medical brethren generally that diphtheria was infectious.

As might be presumed, Dr. Hewitt was alert to welcome every new development in his profession. He accepted at once the statement of Kirchhoff, that whether the bacillus of Koch was truly the cause of Asiatic cholera or not, it was the part of enlightened physicians to act as if it were. He was fully prepared for the invasion of that disease which appeared in some of our seaports in 1890, but happily there was no invasion into Minnesota and the appropriation made by the legislature for repelling it was not used.

He was not content with the new learning in regard to the employment of serums in infectious cases as represented in the journals. To get the essentials of that he went to Paris in the spring of 1890 and put himself under the instruction of Pasteur. His studies were in diphtheria, tuberculosis, and rabies, but his main object was to acquire the method of Pasteur.

The cure of diseases was a solemn duty, which Dr. Hewitt shared with the members of his profession; the prevention of diseases was for him a holy crusade, in which the physicians of the day were not over eager to follow him. The great public, inheriting the belief that disease is inevitable and the day of each one's death appointed, had little faith in the proposals of preventive medicine. His first essay was towards the introduction of efficient ventilation in public institutions and in school-houses. It cannot be doubted that his inspection and recommendations 677 had much to do with experiments which were more or less satisfactory. For dwelling houses he insisted that no ventilating apparatus could equal the open fireplace. He labored vigorously to introduce earth closets for disposing of human excreta where sewers did not exist.

The continued though abated prevalence of typhoid led Dr. Hewitt to examine the water supply of various localities. The results were such as to convince him that an immediate and extensive examination of water supplies generally was demanded. In 1877 he began a sanitary water survey of the state. In the next years he made, and had made, chemical analyses of thousands of samples from lakes, rivers, and wells, in all the settled parts of the state. Later bacteriological examinations were added. How many cities and villages

were moved to install water supply systems is not known, but the number was large. Thousands of people were constrained to disuse wells, which had been erroneously believed to yield healthful waters but in fact where unfit for human use.

It was not till 1885 that the legislature could be moved to enact a law to prevent the pollution of rivers and sources of water supply. This act gave the state board of health general supervision of sources of water supply for towns, villages and cities, and required reports from local authorities, water boards in particular, to the state board.

The passage of this important law was recommended and urged by Governor Hubbard, who, more than any other of the state executives of the time, appreciated the services of the State Board of Health and its working secretary. In the same year was passed the act conferring on the board power to quarantine domestic animals attacked with epidemic diseases. This duty was later and properly devolved on a special “State Live Stock Sanitary Board,” but for some years useful service was rendered under the supervision of Dr. Hewitt. His faithful execution of this law aroused an opposition which at length contributed to his disadvantage.

Mention may here be made of another statute of 1885, empowering the state board of health to regulate offensive trades and employments upon application from parties aggrieved after 678 public hearing. An item well-deserving mention is the investigation made in his laboratory into illuminating oils, particularly petroleum distillates. The result was the establishment of state inspection, which immediately shut unsafe kerosene out of Minnesota.

He was the pioneer in exposing the adulteration of foods and condiments.

The untiring industry of Dr. Hewitt in prevention of disease has no better illustration than that of smallpox. He shared the belief of his profession that effective vaccination, repeated at proper intervals, was a perfect prophylaxis against that fearful scourge. In every possible way, and on all occasions, he advocated vaccination. The best obtainable

virus was distributed from his office. Dissatisfied at length with that furnished by the trade, he established near Red Wing a vaccine farm. There he produced in liberal quantity virus which he knew to be, and which was proved to be efficacious.

It was found that we had to deal in Minnesota not only with cases originating in the state, but in very many instances with imported cases. To check the immigration of persons having the disease, or who might be expected to have it, Dr. Hewitt established in 1879 a system of interstate notification which made it possible to quarantine such persons if they crossed the state lines. Later he prevailed on the U. S. Marine Hospital Service in New York to give him notice of immigrants bound to Minnesota who were likely to bring the infection. A similar courtesy was obtained from Canadian authorities. In the years 1894–95, forty notifications were received from New York, seven from Canada, and two from other sea ports, covering 464 persons who had been exposed to infection. A large number of these were intercepted and examined.

Dr. Hewitt had a cause still dearer to his heart than either the cure or the immediate prevention of disease. He was an apostle of the “art of good living,” which he gave as another name for hygiene. Individuals acting alone could of course practice this art, but they would do more and better for themselves when stimulated by the contagion of community interest. Hygiene was to him above all a social concern. Perhaps the 679 best of all his efforts went to arousing general public interest in health conservation. He wrote, he lectured, he personally exhorted, and sought the co-operation of physicians, clergy, and teachers. He addressed many meetings and conventions of teachers, showing them how to teach hygiene in schools. He called sanitary conferences at St. Paul, Minneapolis, Northfield, Rochester, and other places, which were largely attended. Some of the addresses published in the reports of the board are well worth republication.

On none of these occasions did Dr. Hewitt fail to emphasize his central doctrine, that it is the duty of every community to promote health. The promotion of health, he would say, is “as obligatory upon communities of civilized men as upon individuals.” He cherished

a dream of virtually organizing the whole state into a health association. He was fond of quoting Franklin's sentiment, “Public health is public wealth.” In one of his early reports he asserted that one fifth of the deaths and one-fourth of the sickness in Minnesota were preventable.

As a means of spreading needed information primarily among local health boards, and through them to the general public, he began in 1885 the publication of a monthly periodical entitled “Public Health in Minnesota.” This he not only edited, but wrote large parts of it. Soon after he took the office of secretary, he began the publication of “Circulars of Information,” regarding infectious diseases. The circulars on smallpox, scarlatina, diphtheria, and rabies, were widely distributed and must have done much to quiet fears and direct proper action.

In his whole laborious campaign of education there was nothing into which he threw himself with greater ardor than into his instruction as non-resident professor of public health in the University of Minnesota. Beginning in 1873, for more than twenty years he gave an annual course of lectures to entering classes or the whole student body. There was some variation in his subjects; but the program of 1877 may serve to indicate their scope.

1. Health and hygiene, public and private.

2. Disease; causes and prevention.

3. Poverty and pauperism.

4. To young men.

5. Crime and criminals.

6. Hygiene and education.

7. Hygiene of the home.

8. Success in life.

It was in that year that he began the physical examination of the students. The University authorities, indifferent to this innovation, gave no support, and after two or three years it was abandoned.

Two years before the creation of the State Board of Health, a bureau of statistics had been established in the office of the Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of State being ex officio commissioner of statistics. Provision was made for the collection of vital statistics. Some tables of these had been published, but no one had put them to any use. Dr. Hewitt immediately made a study of the tables, and interpreted their lessons. In 1876 he published a “Study of Vital Statistics of 10,000 Persons,” which set some persons to thinking and ought to have set a great many more.

He found the system of collecting vital statistics so imperfect and inefficient that he soon proposed that the matter of vital statistics be transferred to the State Board of Health. After more than a decade of patient waiting and importunity, that transfer was made. From that time, 1891, the vital statistics of Minnesota have been increasing in value, and under the present administration they rank high among those of sister states. It was Dr. Hewitt's merit to have organized them in right lines.

The labors thus mentioned were verily labors of love. For the first five years of service, Dr. Hewitt received the sum of $250 salary each year. Next for a like term he was paid $500 a year. The salary was then raised to $1,000 for the next four years. Not till 1886 was he paid enough for the support of his family, and then only enough, $2,500. In 1894

an increase to $3,500 made it possible for him to move the office of the State Board to St. Paul and virtually to retire from private practice. He was not long to enjoy that relief.

681

We have considered things which were done. It may be that the future will admire this noble public man the more for the things he would have liked to do; things which could not then be done, partly because the time was not ripe for them, and partly because strength failed. Among these unfilled aspirations were:

1. To have local health boards and health officers paid enough to secure efficiency. In 1896 he reported that more than half the physicians serving as health officers of the state had no pay at all, and of those who did receive salaries the larger number did not receive over $20 each. The highest city salary was but $2,000, and that in only two cities.

2. To have town supervisors elected one at a time for three years, instead of three at a time for one year. When the whole town board, as frequently happened, went out of office, all their successors had to be apprised of their duties as a board of health. Mention has been made of an attempt to remedy this evil by having the town board elect the board of health. This duty was so ill performed, when performed at all, that a return was made to the old form of having the town board itself act as the town board of health. Year after year Dr. Hewitt pleaded with legislatures to arrange town elections so that there would always be a majority of the board holding over. It did not please the legislature to take this perfectly reasonable step till 1905.

3. To have the State establish a hospital for inebriates. This proposition was made in his first report, and was repeated from year to year until the legislature of 1875 took action for the erection of buildings for that purpose at Rochester. As is known, the extraordinary pressure for larger accommodations for increasing numbers of insane, induced the legislature later to divert the institution to that purpose. The inebriate asylum, which Dr. Hewitt so much desired, was opened in the year 1912. It is therefore mentioned here as one of the projects which this many-sided man had at heart, but did not live to see. The

subject of intemperance was one on which he thought intensely. He regarded it as an inheritance of centuries, which could not be abolished by any sudden act of legislation. It might take 682 generations to raise up a body of people so truly temperate and abstinent that the liquor seller's occupation would be gone. For the meantime he preached the reasonable gospel of temperance and practiced it. His lecture on temperance to the University students explained the evil effects of intoxicants on body and mind in forceful but not extravagant terms. He believed that habitual drunkenness was a disease akin to insanity, and therefore held to the conviction that it ought to be treated in institutions where proper restrictive and curative means and surroundings could be provided.

4. To have a Pasteur hospital for the treatment of rabies established under the management of the State Board of Health. On his return from his studies in Paris in 1891 he represented that a beginning might be made at a cost of $1,000 a year. It was many years after Dr. Hewitt's retirement from public service that this highly necessary work was taken up.

5. To have township nurses employed to care for epidemic cases. This recommendation was repeated in successive reports to no purpose. The time was not ripe, and probably it is not yet ripe.

6. To compel the vaccination of the whole population, and to exclude children not vaccinated from public schools. At the present time vaccination is not yet generally compulsory, and only in times of epidemic smallpox can children not vaccinated be excluded from public schools.

7. To have physical examination of all children and youth attending public schools begun and ultimately everywhere conducted. In the years 1877 to 1880 he personally examined 465 students of the University, the records of which may be found in the eighth report of the State Board of Health, for the years 1879–1880.

8. During the twenty years in which he held the position of non-resident professor of Public Health in the University of Minnesota, it was his hope that a Department or College of Public Health might be organized and developed, in which health officers might be trained for the prevention of disease. He was comparatively indifferent to the development of a medical department of the traditional kind, in which men are 683 trained to cure disease. Still he was loyal to his profession, and in the days when the academic work of the University was being patiently built up, before the University resources were adequate to the establishment of a medical college equipped for complete instruction, he suggested the organization of a faculty which should simply hold examinations and grant medical degrees to such as should pass them. This faculty acted as a State Medical Examining Board, and it passed upon the diplomas of all physicians in practice at that time in the state. This organization was made and remained in existence until the University, by absorbing a local medical college, was ready in 1888 to offer instruction. Dr. Hewitt declined a professorship in the enlarged medical college, because of the hope that he might see a department of Public Health opened, in which his talent could be best used and his highest ambition gratified. His dream has not been fulfilled, and long years may pass before an enlightened public, appreciating his splendid idea, will demand this establishment of a college of public health. His lectures on public health were probably the first delivered in an American college.

9. To have a complete sanitary inspection of the State, followed by annual sanitary inspection, with reports to the State Board. Of this it may be said that it was a mere project thrown out to call attention and awaken an interest which in the course of time might ripen into actual undertakings. The idea of a general sanitary survey is probably not yet deemed feasible or desirable by any large number of persons.

During these long years of service, contending against public ignorance, professional indifference, and legislative parsimony, the doctor's enthusiasm was constantly warmed by indications of appreciation. His efficiency in the handling of epidemics compelled

the admiration of his profession and the approval of the general public. Teachers were grateful to him for his labors toward the sanitation of school buildings. He was cheered by the co-operation of the clergy and of many honorable women, whose aid he publicly acknowledged.

His work and writings became known in the neighboring states, and later throughout the country. In 1887 he was President 684 of the American Public Health Association, an organization he had helped to form and build up. His reputation secured to him an associate membership in the Society of Health Officers of England and the Société d'Hygiène of France. In 1891 he attended the International Congress of Medicine and Demography, held in London, and contributed to the discussions. Canadian health authorities respected his acquirements and efficiency, and were ready to co-operate with him. His College gave him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

After a quarter century of devoted service to his State, that service came to an abrupt termination. Dr. Hewitt had never needed to ask for reappointment to membership of the State Board of Health, nor to re-elections as its executive secretary. He had kept the office absolutely clear of political complications. At work in his office on a certain afternoon in January in 1897, word came to him that the Governor had omitted his name from the list of appointments to membership of the State Board. It was the work of a few minutes for him to gather up the few articles belonging to him personally and say a word of parting to his faithful assistants. In his last report, for the preceding year (1896), in a concluding paragraph he expressed, as follows, the feelings of the hour.

The best of my life and effort have gone into this work. I have spared neither time, labor, nor thought, to make it what it ought to be. Such as it is, the record is made and closed. I resume tomorrow the active practice of my profession with the sincere wish that the public health service of Minnesota may maintain and advance the position which it has won among the similar organizations in other states. I am still more anxious that it continue to serve the whole people of Minnesota in the future as in the past.

This removal from the Board came as an absolute surprise. If there had been machinations for it, no one had revealed them to him. Never had he been so full of enthusiasm for his great work, nor more hopeful of increasing usefulness. To find his career as a sanitarian and guardian of the public health of a state thus instantly cut short without warning, was a stunning blow. He left the office and never entered it again, nor held any communication with the State Board of Health or its officers. His was not the philosophy to look upon this decapitation 685 as one of the things likely to happen to any man in the service of the public, holding office at the pleasure of a state executive elected by a political party. At some time even such an office as his would be needed in a political propaganda. It will probably be consented to by all, that one who had labored so faithfully and deserved so well the approval of the public had a certain right to suggest the time and manner of retirement, even when informed that retirement would be inevitable. The writer does not hesitate to say that the action of Governor Clough was simply brutal.

The doctor of course in time recovered from the effects of this relegation to private life. He resumed his private practice at Red Wing, welcomed by a body of old clients. His professional brothers came to him for information and counsel. His home, with its great elms, its vines, and his garden, occupied much of his time. He had long been a busy writer of reports, opinions, essays, editorials, and addresses. He now planned to use this talent in writing out a history of medicine. He had long held the opinion that the great physicians of antiquity whose names have come down to us, while ignorant of anatomy, still possessed arts of diagnosis and healing which moderns have to rediscover. For this purpose he spent some winters at the national capital, where the resources of the Library of Congress were available and freely granted. One winter he spent in Paris. This work he did not live to complete.

Dr. Hewitt had a great capacity for friendship. He cherished to the end the attachments which his college fraternity, the Alpha Delta Phi, had established. Educated in school and college under Episcopalian influences, he maintained his membership in that church

throughout life. It is well worth while to note a characteristic contribution to the work of his parish. He had a notable musical gift, which was shared by his own children. He organized and for many years taught a choir of boys; and he taught them much more than music,—courtesy, and honor, and reverence. The memory of those lessons is still dear to many of “the old choir boys.”

Along with all his engagements he carried on the primary education of his children, and taught as no schoolmaster can be 686 expected to do. He discovered that an immense amount of time was wasted in schools, that the real learning by children was got in a little time and in separate moments of attention. Thirty years ago or more he declared that half of the time of public school children might be given to what was later known as manual training, while still as good progress would be made in the usual school studies.

The life of this noble man, devoted citizen, and sincere Christian, ended after a short illness on July 7, 1910, at the age of seventy-four years. His body was cremated, and the ashes were deposited at his boyhood home in Potsdam, New York. It will be long before Minnesota shall look upon his like again.